

ROCHESTER REVIEW

SOCIAL STUDIES NEWSLETTER

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Social Studies Council

Each school should have one representative attending monthly Social Studies Council meetings. It is imperative for each school to have representation on this council so they may have a voice in the department's decision-making. Notes from February's meeting can be found on the next page. Future meetings will be held at the Congress Avenue facility on the following dates. Representatives from secondary schools will attend from 3:30 - 4:30 and representatives from elementary schools will attend from 4:00 - 5:00.

- Monday, April 13
- Monday, May 18

April Academic Showcase

The Rochester City School District will be putting on an Academic Showcase on April 4th. All schools will be asked to contribute to the event, which will be held at the Convention Center. We want to make sure that Social Studies departments are aware of this and well represented. Let's promote the positive things we are doing and show everyone how powerful Social Studies is in the lives of our students! If you need assistance getting things together, resources or supplies to aid in your display, or even help getting things to or from the exhibition, please contact Jennifer Gkourlias or Steve LaMorte - we'll help!



"Any man worth his salt will stick up for what he believes right, but it takes a slightly better man to acknowledge instantly and without reservation that he is in error."

Andrew Jackson
March 15, 1767 - June 8, 1845

TEACHING AS HISTORIANS



The Teaching American History Grant's *Teaching as Historians* project is kicking off this month on Superintendent's Day. See inside for a description of this and the other offerings for the March 20th conference day. A Summer Institute focused on 19th century Rochester and its significance in the national story will take place the 2nd week of July. Please save the dates. More information will follow.

Social Studies Teaching & Learning Communities

"Social Studies TLC" Collegial Circles will begin in March. These meetings will give teachers the opportunity to share both successes and student learning needs with one another in order to improve their practice. The sessions will run from 4-6 p.m. at the Congress Avenue facility. Future meeting dates and locations will be determined by the participants. Register for these sessions on AVATAR to receive 8 hours of PD credit upon completion. The group will decide on the theme of the session before each meeting.

- Thursday, March 12th: Teachers with the district for 5 years or less
- Monday, March 16th: American History
- Tuesday, March 17th: World History
- Wednesday, March 18th: AP US History
- Thursday, March 19th: AP World History



From the Director...

With heavy eyelids I finally finished Obama's autobiographical journey of self-discovery, Dreams from My Father last night. In the final chapter as he synthesizes his complex journey to know his roots, his purpose, and to find his identity. As he comes to closure, he writes a simple statement which you may recognize also from his inaugural address. Obama implores the world, "We must choose our better history." I love this quote.

Choose your history. Write your story. Determine your future. It is a message of hope. It is also a message of responsibility. There is no greater gift that you are providing students than the power to seek answers to their own questions, to know themselves. To think about the path upon which they walk and the people, the stories, the reasons we are where we are today.

History has liberated. History has oppressed. Knowing history, we can be emancipated. As social studies educators, we have an added responsibility to assure that not only do we expose students to the content, to the knowledge, and the "stuff" of our discipline, but also that we simultaneously provide students the skills of critical analysis. It is not enough to know the facts, but we must be able to question viewpoint, documentation, and sources of our knowledge. We do no service to students if we minimize and pare down to "factoids" information without also asking them how knowledge relates to concepts and themes. In the coming months, we will be examining our departmental expectations for student work through a vertical articulation of research and writing in our secondary program. We will also consider how we can increase the readiness and success of our students in Advanced Placement and IB programs. As you consider how students are preparing for state assessments, consider not only the knowledge that a multiple choice assessment will reflect, but more importantly, how well do my students think critically? Build resiliency in students. Build stamina. Most importantly, build critical thinkers. To start, ask students, "What is our better history? How can we choose it?" Let me know how they respond. We will post their ideas in upcoming editions of The Review. I encourage all of you to join us for our Superintendent's Conference Day programs. With the support of our community partners, SUNY Brockport, the Memorial Art Gallery Education Department, and Teachers Curriculum Institute we have put together an exceptional program.

Social Studies Best Practices

With such an emphasis being placed on high stakes testing in recent years, "assessment" has come to become a word loaded with many negative connotations. Regardless of state and federal requirements, assessing your students' knowledge and skills is a necessity to good teaching and learning. Assessments are crucial because they help teachers gauge their students' understanding of key concepts and skills.



Formative Assessments

Formative assessments are on-going assessments, reviews, and observations in a classroom. They are used to improve instructional methods and as feedback throughout the teaching and learning process. Formative assessments can be quick classroom activities that are easily done in just a few minutes of class time.

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Summative Assessments

Summative Assessments can be thought of as performances of understanding. These performances can range from formal testing sessions like traditional unit exams and DBQ essays, but can take more authentic forms such as culminating projects, research papers, or classroom debates.

Assessment should be happening every day in our classes. So that means you've got to spend tons of time creating these scientific instruments, right? Wrong! You're already doing it. Your Do Now and Bellwork activities, your ticket-out-the-door questions, your verbal questioning during class - they're all great assessments! Just remember the power of these tools and use them to influence your plans for the future of your class. The link below will bring you to the Social Studies SharePoint page. Click on the Social Studies Newsletters link and you can find more about summative and formative assessments.

→ <http://s000s01sps/C4/Social%20Studies/default.aspx>

Rochester Area Council for the Social Studies

The Rochester Area Council for the Social Studies is a professional association of teachers and supervisors at the elementary, secondary, college and university levels. Membership is open to all persons who teach, supervise, develop curricula, engage in research or are otherwise concerned with social studies education

RACSS serves as a marketplace of ideas as well as a forum and showcase for new materials, teaching methods, strategies, programs and personalities.

To join, download a membership form from the address below:



→ <http://www.racss.org/membership.asp>

Superintendent's Day March 20th, 2009

On Conference day, Social Studies teachers will have the option to sign up for the following workshops at the Memorial Art Gallery. These offerings will be posted on AVATAR on 3/2/09.

Teachers As Historians Kick-Off

Participants will examine Roosevelt's New Deal through the examination of primary source documents. Dr. James Spiller of SUNY Brockport will guide participants as they examine a series of documents related to the Great Depression. This session will immediately follow Focusing With Foggy Lenses and serves as the official kick-off for Rochester's Teaching American History Grant Program.

Focusing With Foggy Lenses

Acknowledging many people's keen interest in America's past and common misperceptions about the discipline of history, this presentation addresses how academic historians practice their craft. It examines the objective limitations of historical inquiry, subjective filters that scholars bring to their craft, and types of "historiographic" questions they

ask, and it identifies the critical value of historical interpretation in American life. Participants will use some provided primary historical documents to discuss these issues and practice the craft of historical inquiry.

History Alive! Reaching All Learners

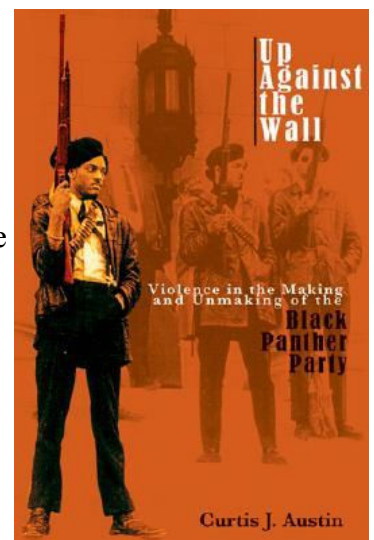
Participants in this session will experience two strategies to increase student engagement in the social studies classroom: The Experiential Exercise and Writing for Understanding. Teacher's Curriculum Institute Trainers will present the strategies and provide teachers with hands-on experiences to bring the techniques into their classroom. A copy of *Bring Learning Alive!* will be provided free to each participant and additional instructional materials will be raffled off at each session.

The Five Faiths: Using Art Works and Objects to Teach the Major World Religions

Participants in this session will engage in a guided tour of select museum pieces focusing on the religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Teachers will hear from museum educators about how to use the MAG's resources in their classes and have an opportunity to examine other gallery works. Participants will leave with information and resources which can easily be put to use in their classes.

Collegial Book Circle

Stefan Cohen will be leading a collegial book circle this Spring with the book *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party* by Curtis J. Austin. Sessions will be a combination of discussion of the book and the Black Panthers as well as exploring the book's application in the classroom. Meetings will be taking place in April and May. Dates and registration will be in AVATAR.



FEATURED TEACHER

Ramon Gonzalez III

School: Monroe High School

Years in District: 4

Subjects Currently Teaching: 7th & 8th grade Social Studies: American History

Favorite Social Studies Topics: WWI & II, Civil War, French Revolution

Why does Social Studies Rock? I think Social Studies is the best because it shows us that we can learn from our mistakes in the past and what not to do to repeat them in the future.

Proud Teaching Moment: My proudest moment is when a student realizes that they get "it". When they finally get to that point in their academic life when school work is not work, it's a tool for them to reach their goals.

About Ramon's class...

Every year for my "Western frontier and Big Business unit, I take my students to Strong National Museum of play. At Strong they will take part in two lessons: Birth of an Industrial Nation; where the students will be broken down into two groups and work on a real life assembly line. They will work together to manufacture toy cars and compete against the other group. While working on the assembly line each student will be assigned a specific task and have to perform that task in character. (supervisor, foreman, American factory worker, immigrant factory worker) The second lesson the students will be taking part in is called: The Immigration Experience; in this lesson students will learn as they reenact Immigration Recognition Day. They will role play as immigrants or reporters.



Do you know a teacher who should be recognized for their achievements? Is there someone in your building who is caring, witty, good-looking, and of course, passionate about Social Studies? Do you just want to toot your own horn? If you answered yes to any of these questions, contact Steve LaMorte and nominate someone to be our next featured teacher!

Important Dates

Friday, March 20

- Superintendent's Day

Monday, March 30

- World Religions Seminar

Wednesday, April 1

- TAH Session - Cultural History: The Great Depression and Work Projects Administration Poster Art

Monday, April 6

- World Religions Seminar

Monday, April 13

- Social Studies Council

Monday, April 27

- Picturing America Party (Secondary)

Tuesday, April 28

- Picturing America Party (Elementary)

Monday, May 11

- Environmental Politics and Culture in Modern American History - Dr. James Spiller.

Monday, May 18

- Social Studies Council
- World Religions Seminar

Social Studies Council Update

Check out some of the hot topics at Social Studies Council...



Vertical Teaming

Much discussion is taking place about the ways in which our students' skills and proficiencies should be developing over their academic careers. The need to team vertically, across grade level, is necessary. This is the only way we can assure our students are mastering the abilities we want them to. The Council will continue to discuss this topic and flush out concrete plans for student expectations and competencies in each grade level.

Your Feedback is Needed!

The only way to guarantee your concerns and opinions are heard is to have a representative from your school attending Council meetings. Please also be sure to fill out the Social Studies Resource Inventories sent to you earlier this year. We still need these to be returned from many schools. They are critical to our program development.